COUNTRY FIELD STUDY:

GEORGIA

INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON U.S. GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES AND TRAINING (IAWG)

JULY 2000

Executive Summary

In May 2000, the Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training (IAWG) sent a team representing four federal agencies and the IAWG to Tbilisi, Georgia, to conduct a one-week study of international exchanges and training programs from the field perspective. Georgia was chosen because of the high level of U.S. Government (USG) assistance provided to the country, its role in regional stability, and the transition to democracy and market economy that it is attempting after achieving independence from approximately 200 years of Russian/Soviet colonial rule. Georgia, as well as many of the individual programs resident there, is described by many as a "work in progress." Tangible, sustainable results appear to be limited by endemic government corruption and economic crisis. The challenges facing U.S. Government programmers are great.

Coordination & Cooperation: Coordination and cooperation among programs is a key priority of U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Yalowitz, and hence, the U.S. Embassy's staff. [1] The Ambassador's *Four Point Program*, which identifies key priority areas, provides a framework for coordination not only among the USG community, but also with the Government of Georgia (GOG) and the community of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Several other mechanisms, both informal and formal, are also employed. However, the imbalance between the high level of programming and the small Embassy staff has rendered effective coordination a challenge, but one the staff is striving to meet.

Partnerships: Cooperation with the GOG is facilitated through the Four Point Program teams. However, government corruption thwarts many efforts of the USG. Additionally, USG and NGO representatives voiced the concern that partnering with certain key components of the GOG lends undeserved legitimacy to corrupt institutions and individuals and consequently, creates negative public perceptions about the U.S. role in Georgia. The NGO community in Georgia (both U.S. and indigenous) is strong and proliferating. The GOG has not created significant obstacles to NGO development. NGOs, for the most part, operate collegially and are mutually supportive. They provide valuable insight and expertise to the U.S. Government.

Performance Measurement: The USG community in Georgia faces similar performance measurement challenges as USG entities in Washington. However, there is a critical need for results measurement in Georgia. Embassy personnel and NGO representatives expressed concern that quite a few programs are slow or unable to produce the desired results and questioned whether approaches should be reviewed and changed. In order to properly assess approaches and programmatic impact, there needs to be a systematic methodology in place to measure and manage results.

Verification of Data: There are many international exchanges and training projects administered by Embassy personnel in Georgia that are not reported to the IAWG by Washington representatives. Omissions are largely based on the proliferation of ad hoc projects that respond to immediate needs and opportunities.

---

[1] Please note, in the context of this report, the terms Embassy and Embassy staff refer to all U.S. Government organizations and staff operating as the U.S. Mission in Georgia.

Overview

International exchanges and training programs in Georgia must be viewed through the lens of Georgia's distinct cultural heritage, its recent experiences when obtaining independence from the former Soviet Union, and its current troublesome political-economic situation. For most of Georgia's existence as a definable political entity, it has been under the domination of other nations. Russian annexation of the lands that comprise modern-day Georgia was carried out in the 19th century. In 1921, after approximately two years of independence, Georgia was forcefully incorporated into the Russia-dominated USSR. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Georgia found itself in the unfamiliar position of being an independent nation. Managing its own foreign and domestic affairs, including serving the needs of its population of over five million, was something for which Georgia was not fully prepared.

Immediately after becoming independent in 1991, Georgia was beset by wide-scale civil unrest that was caused by battling political factions and resurgent separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, both of which resulted in tens of thousands of casualties and internally displaced persons. Civil unrest further weakened an already weak economic system by breaking vital links between Georgia and its traditional markets, limiting privatization and discouraging foreign investments. When coupled with the loss of transfers from the Soviet national budget and endemic corruption and chronic budgetary mismanagement, one understands that the challenge of strengthening an independent Georgia, based on democratic principles and market-driven economy, is great indeed.

- Corruption seems to affect all activities of the Georgian public sector. While there are reform-minded individuals within the government, the system in which they must operate often thwarts their efforts. Tenuous political stability is sought at the cost of accountability.

- Salaries of workers in the public sector are far below living standards, payments to pensioners and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are well below the cost of living and lagging far behind, budget allocations are insufficient to meet even the most rudimentary needs of many ministries, the black and gray markets prevail, and the IMF is withholding new loans until expenditures are brought under control. One of the few positive economic signs in Georgia is the relative stability of the Georgian lari. (Despite the fact that it decreased 50 percent in value two years ago, the lari is now fairly stable).

Individual Georgians and Americans working to resolve problems in Georgia expressed extreme frustration, marked by cautious optimism at best and abject resignation at worst, regarding the ability of USG programs to produce short-term positive change. Most agreed that long-term attitudinal changes, consistent with the rights and obligations of citizens in a modern democratic state, must occur before widespread beneficial results can be achieved and measured. It is clear that Georgia will be unable to make progress in its transition to democracy and a market economy until the economic situation is improved and corruption is drastically reduced.

It is important for the United States to stay engaged in Georgia, despite the challenges faced there because:

- Georgia is of strategic geopolitical interest in the region.

- Georgia is a critical player regionally, presenting a neutral location for programs with Armenia and Azerbaijan.

- The Georgian Government, at least on the surface, is reform-minded. Reform-oriented laws and regulations have been introduced, the Georgian Government willingly cooperates with the United States Government to "achieve" joint objectives, and close ties with the West are sought and nurtured.

- Georgia is the second largest per capita recipient of U.S. assistance in the NIS (after Armenia).

Coordination and Cooperation

Coordination and cooperation among USG organizations was described to team members repeatedly as a "work in progress." While Embassy staff have several formal coordination mechanisms in place and are reinitiating some that had fallen out of practice, the degree to which these mechanisms are used may need to be strengthened. That said, almost every individual interviewed at the Embassy noted the Ambassador's strong commitment to coordination and cooperation. Though the team did not meet with the Ambassador himself (he was away from the Embassy at the time of our study), the importance given to his priorities and goals was expressed in each of our meetings.

The Ambassador has created an excellent vehicle for interagency coordination and cooperation, as well as coordination with non-USG entities, through the *Four Point Program*. The *Four Point Program* identifies four areas that the USG and the Government of Georgia have agreed are current areas of priority to assist Georgia in its transition to democracy and market economy: anti-corruption, revenue generation, expenditure control, and administrative/civil service reform.[2] Teams have been created for each of these areas with a USG and GOG co-chair. All USG organizations serve on the teams that are appropriate to their areas of programming.

Many examples of interagency cooperation are evident at the Embassy. There are several formal coordination mechanisms that cover the full breadth of the Embassy's programming:

- **Country Team Meeting:** This weekly meeting is headed by the Ambassador and is a vehicle for the Ambassador to assess immediate situations and keep abreast of developments.

[2]The *Four Point Program* follows the Ambassador's original *Five Point Program* which stressed anti-corruption efforts, land reform, privatization, small- and medium-size entrepreneurial development, and tax and revenue enhancement. While identifying areas of priority, the *Program* does not encompass all Mission activities.

- **Mission Core Group Meetings:** The Mission Core Group is comprised of the heads of each agency represented at the Embassy and is chaired by the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) and the Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Georgia. Its purpose is to address key issues that affect multiple agencies and their work. The Group serves a cross-cutting function among the Ambassador's primary four areas of interest as they are addressed by U.S. activities. The Mission Core Group meets every other week.

- **Policy Coordinating Committee:** This committee, which meets weekly, is chaired by the Ambassador and addresses policy directions for the Embassy. Not all agencies represented at the Embassy are included.

In addition to the above, there are several program and issue-specific coordinating mechanisms, including:

- **Democracy and Governance (D&G) Team:** This team, chaired by the DCM and the head of the Democracy and Governance Office at USAID, has recently been reconstituted and will meet monthly. Comprised of representatives from the Public Affairs Section (formerly USIS), USAID, the political section, the Resident Legal Advisor, and the Deputy Chief of Mission, this team provides a forum for interagency planning and coordination. The team also serves as the Embassy's Democracy Commission.

- **International Visitors Program:** The Public Affairs Section administers the Department of State's International Visitors Program and other programs authorized by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (Fulbright-Hays Act). The Section solicits nominations for the visitor programs not only from the various elements of the Embassy, but also from the local NGO community. This provides a programming tool to the various Embassy elements and enables them to compare information on which Georgians are the most appropriate program participants.

- **Law Enforcement Working Group:** This group, chaired by the DCM, meets monthly to provide a forum for all Embassy entities involved with law enforcement issues. At the time of the IAWG study, this team had not met recently.

In addition to the above, there are many informal channels of communication among Embassy staff. Organizations and individuals cooperate informally on issue areas where complementary programs exist or where goals and objectives are shared. Often the programming burden borne by Embassy representatives makes this the easiest form of cooperation. Co-location would further facilitate this type of coordination. It was noted by one USG official that informal coordination was easier and more common before USAID moved away from the Embassy.

Duplication and Complementarity

The IAWG study team did not find any egregious areas of duplication at the Embassy. Communication among entities is such that program complementarity is more likely. The rule of law/administration of justice area of programming provides a useful context when examining these issues.

Rule of Law/Administration of Justice/Law Enforcement:

There are many important programs dealing with rule of law, the administration of justice, and law enforcement issues currently being implemented in Georgia. Responsibility for training and assistance efforts in these areas is split among a number of entities, including: USAID; the Public Affairs Section (representing the Public Diplomacy functions of the Department of State); the U.S. Department of the Treasury; the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and their partner NGOs. In the areas of rule of law, administration of justice, and law enforcement the Ambassador's directive to increase cooperation and coordination at the Embassy is of particular importance, not only to monitor for duplication of effort, but also to ensure that knowledge gained in the implementation of one program can be effectively utilized in another. Training, assistance, and reform programs relating to the judiciary, the procuracy, customs, and border guards are examples of areas where the sharing of information and coordination efforts are occurring at the Embassy. Formal and regularized groups such as the Mission Core Group and the Democracy and Governance team; Embassy groups dealing with anti-corruption and other specific topics; and informal groups, such as the one organized by the Resident Legal Advisor to deal with specific aspects of corruption, are vehicles where information is routinely shared. Additionally, assessment teams conducting studies in each of these areas are comprised of representatives from multiple agencies. Examples of this occurred in recent studies regarding the need for qualification examinations for the judiciary, the procuracy and the Georgian bar, and in a number of studies regarding anti-corruption efforts. In some instances there was intentional overlap in the composition of the assessment teams, and in all of the studies, the findings were readily shared.

U.S. assistance programs have been instrumental in helping Parliament enact reform-oriented legislation, including a new Administrative Code, Civil and Criminal Codes, Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes, Law on the Courts of Common Jurisdiction, and Law on the Procuracy, among others.

USAID was instrumental in assisting the Government of Georgia with the enactment of the Administrative Code. The landmark Freedom of Information section provides a tool to expose and remove corruption. USAID trained the primary drafters of the code; sponsored a conference with representatives from the government, judiciary, media, and NGOs to examine freedom of information issues; and trained 300 government officials on the implementation of the code.

While some representatives in Georgia are unsure whether the code will be adequately implemented, the GOG has requested that USAID fund a website for the Election Commission, which would make publicly available a wide variety of information including outcomes and complaints filed. This is a significant effort to enhance transparency and is largely credited to the existence of the Freedom of Information section of the Administrative Code.

Many valuable programs exist in the areas of rule of law, administration of justice, and law enforcement programming. The study team would like to focus on two of these programs to show how cooperation, program complementarity, partnership with NGOs, and a flexible outlook toward programming provide the recipe for success.

Best Practice 1: Administration of Justice/Law Enforcement Programming

Upon arriving in Georgia, the Resident Legal Advisor for the Department of Justice found the Georgian prosecutors office (the Procuracy) accustomed to the practice of selecting the individuals who would attend pre-set U.S. sponsored training courses on law enforcement and rule of law issues. The RLA began to adjust the focus of how programming and the selection of participants could be utilized not only to impart knowledge in specific areas, but also to build indigenous capacity and sustainability within participating institutions.

The approach is holistic in nature. The RLA created working groups around six topics of primary interest to law enforcement in Georgia: anti-corruption, terrorism, narcotics trafficking, transnational organized crime, financial crimes/money laundering, and smuggling issues/border control. Where possible, predominantly young, aggressive, reform-minded representatives of the Government of Georgia, and other entities were selected to serve on the working groups, along with representatives of agencies at the Embassy. The RLA tried to cast as broad a net as appropriate to these topics in selecting the working groups. For topics that affected a broad range of entities and interests outside of law enforcement, such as anti-corruption, representatives of the Procuracy, Georgian governmental entities, parliament, NGOs, and the media served on the working group. In more sensitive areas, such as terrorism, the working groups were restricted to law enforcement personnel.

Conference dates were set, and the working groups were then exposed to a broad range of information, materials, and approaches to addressing the issues related to their specific topics. Materials representing the U.S. approach to a given topic, as well as examples of approaches adopted by European countries -- including those that had been in the Soviet sphere of influence -- and international organizations were made available. The working groups then attended conferences, reviewed these varied materials, and developed strategies responsive to the realities in Georgia. The knowledge base and contacts of these working groups are also utilized by the RLA to select motivated participants for the conferences. The recommendations of the working groups are used not only to aid the U.S. Government in developing training and assistance programs, but more importantly are directed to the Government of Georgia in hopes of influencing its future actions and policies in the areas addressed.

Best Practice 2: Interagency and Partner Collaboration on Local Government Issues

Background: In June 1998, the last-minute adoption of a local election law caught the donor community in Georgia by surprise. Funds for election support and local government strengthening activities had been reprogrammed, and the fall election of Georgia's first local

councils required assistance in election support, fiscal decentralization and training to prepare newly-elected councilors to exercise their role in budget, oversight, and public outreach. USAID managed to reprogram $350,000 for election support but the $1.2 million originally reserved for its new local government project was no longer available.

Linkages: Using USAID's existing training programs and projects that address political processes, U.S. Treasury budget policy support and the U.S. Information Service (USIS - now the Public Affairs Section under the Department of State) Community Connections and Democracy Commission grants programs, the Embassy was able to fill the urgent shortfall.

USAID and USIS held a joint planning session in August 1998 to determine priorities and resource allocation over the next 12 months. USIS agreed to conduct a pre-election poll whose results were used in design of International Foundation for Election System's (IFES) voter education program. Next, a comprehensive training and grant program was developed, this time with the collaboration of several NGO partners including the Academy for Educational Development (AED), American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACCELS), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), and the Eurasia Foundation.

USAID kicked off the training effort with a national conference conducted by AED and NDI on local government legislation, budget, oversight, and public outreach for the new chairmen and opposition leaders of the 75 district councils. These themes were repeated in the USIS Community Connections study tours to the United States, and ACCELS, the USIS training contractor, used the conference to begin the participant selection process, based on criteria developed by the multiagency group. The Eurasia Foundation designed a follow-on local government grant program, which focused on the skills developed during the two previous phases of the program.

This formula was so successful that, with some variations, joint planning and programming continued even when funds became available for the postponed local government project. In FY 2000, USAID held 20 training sessions in the provinces, which were used by the Public Affairs Section to select participants and augment the follow-on Community Connections program. In addition, USAID and the Public Affairs Section jointly developed plans for their respective follow-on study tours, maximizing opportunities for a greater diversity of participants and topics while eliminating the possibility of duplication and competition for participants.

Another feature of the collaborative effort is the support provided to the local councils' association. Created as a result of the USAID conference by Community Connections Alumni, with NDI's technical assistance and support from USIS for a newsletter, the Councilmen's Association of Georgia (CAG) is the only multipartisan local government association in Georgia.

During this period, Parliament and the Ministry of Finance received intensive technical assistance from USAID and the U.S. Department of the Treasury on local budgets, municipal finance, budgetary transfer formulas, and condominium legislation, culminating in a jointly-funded

conference on fiscal decentralization, and the adoption of a law on local economic development. A package of eight other draft laws will be debated during the fall session. (This effort has involved Treasury consultants who scheduled their visits to coincide with USAID/Democracy and Governance activities, Barents [USAID's tax and fiscal contractor], two Treasury budget advisors, and the directors of democracy and governance and economic restructuring, as well as DG's civil society specialist).

Actual and Anticipated Results: Because of the United State's integrated, multifaceted local governance program, Georgia's local councilors received much needed orientation, training, and exposure to successful U.S. local government paradigms only months after taking office. According to the participating councilors (over 700 to date), this support enabled them to better understand and carry out their functions and implement successful public outreach programs early in their terms of office. It also enabled them to organize an advocacy group, which is lobbying for amendments to the legislation to clarify their responsibilities and provide the councils with greater authority. While other donors are beginning to add this sector to their portfolios, the U.S. program was the only source of sustained assistance during a critical period when no other support was available. Building on this new cadre of trained local council members, a new USAID project will be able to extend the benefits of this assistance much more quickly to Georgia's local councils and, more importantly, to the communities and citizens that they represent.

To date over 20 individuals representing three U.S. Government and six nongovernmental organizations have participated in developing and implementing these collaborative projects.

Graduate-Level Academic Programs

There appears to be no duplication in graduate-level academic programming among the very limited number of such USG activities in Georgia. The primary player is the Public Affairs Section, with its myriad educational programs supported under the authorities of Fulbright-Hays and the Freedom Support Acts.

The importance of academic programs and the role these contributions make to long-term attitudinal change can not be overemphasized. Alexander Rondeli, the director of the Georgian Foreign Ministry's foreign policy research and analysis center, notes in a recent *Georgia Today* article that students receiving a Western education, particularly those who study abroad, build up important social capital for the society and state.[3] This sentiment was repeated by many in the Embassy community.

Business Development Programs

While two major business development programs are active in Georgia -- Community Connections and the Department of Commerce's Special American Business Internship Training Program (SABIT) -- the field administrators of these programs felt that they did not duplicate each other. These programs focus on different target audiences, different sectors, and use different selection criteria. Even if minor

[3]Susie Mesure, "Independence: Getting There Slowly," *Georgia Today*, May 26-June 1, 2000, p.7.

programmatic duplication were to occur, it probably would not be harmful given the great need for business training in Georgia.

Obstacles

The Embassy staff in Georgia face many major obstacles. Several affect their ability to better coordinate programs and present a coherent and well-reasoned programmatic approach.

Resource Imbalance: U.S. assistance to Georgia has increased significantly over the past several years. Staff increases and expansion of facilities to accommodate these expanded resources, however, have lagged behind. More than one Embassy staff person expressed the concern that the resources given to the country had exceeded the U.S. Embassy's ability to administer them optimally. However, the staffing situation is improving. There have been several additions to the staff as well as the normal cyclical changes. While the additional staff is a positive development for the Embassy, the fact that hiring was not synchronized with the increase in available resources created challenges. Many individuals indicated that their heavy workload hampered close coordination and information sharing. The IAWG country team found an extraordinarily busy Embassy, with human resources stretched thin.

Conflicting Imperatives: Several individuals at the Embassy expressed a desire to see the overall U.S. programming approach in Georgia reviewed and modified, but noted that there is some resistance at the Embassy to making mid-course programming and policy corrections, which may be partly due to the unique, but somewhat inflexible, approaches of particular organizations represented at the Embassy. Many felt that the Embassy is stuck between a rock and a hard place. Embassy personnel must respond to directives from Washington regarding their interactions with the Georgian Government (support the leadership, prioritize border security, etc.), but they must also make tangible advances in assisting with the transition to democracy and market economy. Generic program models and approaches will not work in Georgia. The experts on the ground are more familiar with the particular challenges there than many of the individuals dictating programming to them from Washington. The Embassy staff need to be given the authority and flexibility necessary to make mid-course corrections when current approaches fail to yield sufficient results that are effective and measurable.

Frustration: The above two factors have contributed to a pervasive sense of frustration throughout the Embassy, which extends to the NGO community and may be shared by the population at large, over the disproportionate ratio of effort to results. Innovative and impressive programming thrives in many sections of the Embassy, but the systemic challenges that exist in Georgia, most notably corruption, greatly hinder results. Several individuals indicated that they think switching to non-project-based aid and/or conditional assistance/programming is necessary to get the reform process in Georgia back on track. Nearly every individual with whom we spoke believed some notion of accountability on the part of program recipients should be incorporated into U.S. programming. They indicated that if a well-crafted plan could be developed for incorporating conditionality/accountability into some programs, programmers would have the needed tools to effectively reach their goals and achieve program results[4].

[4]USAID notes that "conditionality" is usually required when USAID does project-based assistance. However, non-project-based assistance with conditions is rarer.

Despite what the IAWG study team found to be fairly uniform acceptance of this idea, most of the people expressing it thought of themselves as the minority within the Embassy community.

Private Sector Partnership

By many accounts, NGOs in Georgia have proliferated over the past several years. The IAWG study team met with representatives of U.S. NGOs with field offices in Georgia as well as representatives of indigenous NGOs. Both give the impression of a strong, capable, and devoted community that strives to assist Georgia in its transition to democracy and market economy. These organizations are valuable partners to the U.S. Government community and are crucial implementers of many U.S. Government-sponsored initiatives. [Many indigenous NGOs involve or were founded by alumni of U.S. Government exchanges and training programs.]

Surprisingly, the NGOs report few barriers to their existence in Georgia. With the exception of complicated registration processes and frequently ignored tax exemptions, the atmosphere in Georgia is supportive of their existence. The team also noted the collegial attitude and mutual support articulated throughout the NGO community. One American representative, for example, noted that her organization was going to co-locate with another organization to facilitate cooperation and coordination. This same representative also credited her colleagues at other organizations with helping her through the confusing NGO registration process.

U.S. Government representatives work with the NGOs in a variety of ways. As mentioned earlier, the Resident Legal Advisor involves NGO representatives in his programming and consultative activities, and the Public Affairs Section solicits NGO nominations for its International Visitors Program. Additionally, USAID brings its NGOs together on a monthly basis to discuss their activities and facilitate discussions of common issues. While these meetings received mixed reviews as to their programmatic usefulness, all agreed that they present a good opportunity for people to meet and stay abreast of their colleagues' activities.

NGOs suffer some of the same risks in Georgia as the U.S. Government. NGOs voice the concern that close association with the corrupt entities they are assisting to reform lends these entities undeserved legitimacy and, consequently, can create negative public perceptions about the NGOs and damage their credibility.

The business sector in Georgia, as in many regions of the world, is not yet a committed partner to international exchanges and training programs. While there exist several examples of private sector entities contributing in some way to USG efforts (e.g., making in-kind donations for alumni projects or activities), there is no systemic corporate culture of philanthropy. Given Georgia's history, its societal focus on the extended family, and the perilous economic situation, it is unlikely that such a culture will take root there in the near future.

Best Practice: NGO Cooperation

The Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF), part of the Soros network of foundations, and the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) have agreed to cooperate on an Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) site in Batumi, Georgia. IATP sites, which are sponsored by the U.S. Government, allow public access to the Internet and increase Internet user proficiency through training. Previously, both OSGF and IREX administered separate Internet access programs. By pooling their resources, IREX and OSGF will achieve greater efficiency and reduce administrative overhead, while maintaining a high level of service. This cooperative approach to programming exemplifies both the commitment and collegiality of NGO institutions in Georgia.

Host Government Partnership

Host government partnership in Georgia is a double-edged sword. Within the realm of international exchanges and training, cooperation and support from host government entities is routinely considered desirable. In Georgia, however, many individuals voiced concern that popular opinion, if it hasn't already, would soon view the U.S. Government as propping up a corrupt regime. [As previously mentioned, corruption is pervasive in Georgia, both at the individual and organizational level. Government officials are constrained from making a living wage outside their official position, yet are paid far below the living wage in legal compensation.] While there are reform-minded individuals in the Georgian government who are valuable and valued partners in USG-sponsored programming, they are in the minority. There is always a concern that lending assistance designed to change the system from within may inadvertently lend credibility to undeserving entities.

This is a conundrum that is not easily solved in the short-term. There is consensus that over a longer period of time, the growth of independent media and citizens organizations will combine with individuals schooled in democratic principals to alter the attitudes of both government and society. Because corruption has such a huge impact on U.S. Government programming at all levels, joint anti-corruption programs between the U.S. Government and reform-minded officials within the Government of Georgia may be the key to success in the long term.

Best Practice: Joint Anti-Corruption Efforts

Under the Ambassador's *Four Point Program* initiatives, the Embassy and the Government of Georgia joined together to form an intergovernmental working group on combating corruption in government. This group, chaired by the Resident Legal Advisor and the Georgian National Security Advisor, includes representatives of USAID, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the European Union, various components of the Government of Georgia, and others.

In the summer of 1999, the working group adopted a proposal drafted by the Resident Legal Advisor to establish an independent anti-corruption agency in the executive branch that would focus the GOG's efforts against corruption in government. Key elements of the Georgian government, influential members of Parliament, and President Shevardnadze endorsed the proposal. During our visit in May of 2000, we noticed a high degree of frustration among members of the working group. Some expressed doubts that their proposal would actually ever be implemented.

Since the time of the IAWG study of Georgia, significant progress has occurred. On July 11, 2000, President Shevardnadze issued a decree establishing an Anti-Corruption Commission. The Commission will embrace a comprehensive plan dealing with enforcement, preventative measures, and education programs, and is charged with issuing a report on its efforts in the fall of 2000. The Government of Georgia is asking for U.S. assistance to train and equip the Commission. USAID and the Department of Justice/Department of State-INL are the primary U.S. Government entities that will develop assistance for this new Commission. The efforts and persistence of the Embassy in pressing this issue have been exemplary.

Performance Measurement

Similar to their Washington counterparts, U.S. Embassy staff find performance measurement a true challenge. The normal host of difficulties that are apparent in other locales are also found in Georgia.

- Inadequate data management systems
- Inadequate staff to track participants and perform long-term assessments
- Lack of clear directives from management and Washington on performance measurement expectations

However, in Georgia, addressing this problem takes on greater urgency as Embassy staff question the ability of programs, as currently designed, to achieve short-term and therefore measurable results. A solid performance measurement system spanning all USG programs could serve two vital purposes.

First, performance data could provide the concrete information on program effectiveness necessary to justify (1) mid-course programming adjustments, (2) long-term re-assessments of approaches, and (3) resource reallocations.

Second, performance measurement could provide near-term feedback for USG decision makers. It is easy to lose sight of the incremental progress being made when attention is focused primarily or solely on long-term results. Programs in Georgia are making a difference now. For example, the development of strong NGOs, such as the Georgian Young Lawyers Association, demonstrates that U.S. programs can be effective and have a long-term, positive impact on Georgian society.

Primarily notable are the lack of clear directives on performance measurement and the burden that measuring and tracking performance places on the already strained resources of the Embassy. It is clear that good performance measurement requires good data management, yet a solid, reliable data management system may exist only through USAID's TrainNet, which is used only by that organization. And it is uncertain whether USAID entities, aside from the contractor principally responsible for training, actually use that system.

Verification of FY 1998 and FY 1999 Data

As has been reported in other IAWG country studies, there are large numbers of projects occurring in the field that are not tracked or reported by Washington-based program representatives. Many of these are so-called opportunistic projects (ad hoc projects created with little lead time in direct response to an in-country or regional programming opportunity or policy need.) These projects are of great value and demonstrate the quick response capabilities and flexibility that are two of the many strengths of Embassy-sponsored programs. However, by not capturing data on these programs, the IAWG is unable to adequately demonstrate the magnitude and potential benefits of USG-sponsored programs.

The IAWG's recent decision to encourage organizations to report, either quantitatively or qualitatively, international exchanges and training programs that utilize alternate methodologies[5] has helped address this problem. The IAWG expects that the FY 1999 inventory of programs will provide a more complete picture of USG activities than any previous report.

Anecdotal evidence from program administrators in the field emphasize that alternate methodologies, such as in-country training and distance education, are often preferred when attempting to achieve short-term results. Additionally, field program administrators are using third-country training programs to reduce costs, reduce inconvenience to participants (travel time and time away from home), as well as expose participants to regional experts who have successfully addressed many of the same challenges faced by Georgians.

[5]Alternate methodologies are those approaches to international exchanges and training programs that yield similar results as traditional approaches without necessitating that participants cross international borders. They include, but are not limited to, in-country training and distance learning.

One of the remaining primary challenges to reporting full and complete data on international exchanges and training programs is the lack of feasible data management systems. Individuals at the Embassy seemed to agree that tracking programs and individual participants is important. Such information management facilitates coordination, can help eliminate "double dipping," eases the identification of participants for follow-on programming among agencies, and facilitates longer-term monitoring of results. However, resources (both technical and human) are sorely lacking in Georgia. The Embassy seems to barely have sufficient staff to implement required programming, let alone create and maintain an interagency data management system.

Additional Issues

Two additional issues struck the IAWG study team as crucial to the successful implementation of international exchanges and training programs in Georgia: foreign language competence and participant selection.

Foreign Language Competence

As part of a commentary on modernization, a witty East Georgian anecdote appeared in *The Georgia Times* (May 25, 2000):

> A Kakhetian (East Georgian) farmer is lying under a chestnut tree after having completed a demanding task. An American tourist comes along and asks for directions in English. The relaxing Kakhetian shakes his head to indicate his lack of understanding. The American repeats his question in German, French, and several other languages with the same negative result. Disappointed and frustrated, the tourist leaves. The farmer's wife, who had been observing the exchange, argues the importance of foreign language competence to the farmer's future. The farmer, who has not changed from his prone position under the tree, turns around and contemptuously dismisses her argument with the observation that competence in several languages did not solve the tourist's problem.

Unable to speak Georgian, the American tourist, whose linguistic competence, no doubt, is exaggerated, will likely encounter difficulty reaching his destination. The farmer, who speaks only Georgian, limits his future growth and prosperity.

While communications between American mentors and Georgian trainees are not as bad as depicted in this anecdote, they are far from ideal. The IAWG study team notes that neither the United States nor Georgia can fully meet the need for linguistically competent experts, trainees, and instructional materials crucial for participation in programs designed to further their respective national interests.

English is the primary language used in many programs designed to develop a stable, independent, market-oriented, and democratic Georgia. English-speaking Georgians welcome English instruction because concepts involving technology, democracy, judicial ethics, market mechanisms, a free press, and the development of trial advocacy skills and freedom of information statutes, are best conveyed in

English. It is argued that the Russian and Georgian languages, at present, do not have sociolinguistic equivalents. But, there are drawbacks. Understanding the subject matter, of course, depends entirely on the level of the trainee's English proficiency. And, English-only training limits participation in these programs to the English-speaking elite.

Training conducted in Russian, a language in which many Georgians are proficient and training materials already exist, is not a solution. After having gained their voice internationally, Georgians display growing hostility toward the use of Russian as the language of instruction. The Georgians' experiences with Russian colonialism, autocracy, and orthodoxy may impede their comprehension of democracy and market economies, especially when filtered through the Russian language. It is also not clear whether American instructors completely understand the cultural frames of reference of their Georgian students.

Interpreters can provide broader access to training and are often used in USG programs. Interactive training sessions on a wide variety of subject matters involve interpretations from English to Russian, English to Georgian, Russian to Georgian, Russian to English, Georgian to English, and Georgian to Russian. One weakness of interpretation, however, is that considerable substance can be lost in the translation. And, the absence of appropriate, readily available instructional materials that could be used in conjunction with the lectures compounds the problem.

Most of those involved with training the Georgians recognize that Georgian, Russian, and English language competence is the key to the success (or failure) of their short- and long-term training goals. For example, the Defense Language Institute (DLI) is involved in providing English language training to Georgians in the United States, developing language laboratories, and establishing an English language program at the Georgian military academy. The U.S. Agency for International Development has issued grants for the development of databases and electronic and hardcopy instructional material in Georgian, Russian, and English, as well as other languages of the Caucasus, which focus on private enterprise development, public administration and policy, and civil society. The George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies offers classroom, in-country, and computerized language instruction for military and civilian linguists. Other programs, such as those authorized by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (Fulbright-Hays Act), train Georgians to become more linguistically competent and enhance the language competence of those few Americans who are Georgian specialists.

Continued efforts in this area are needed. Geopolitical interests, including access to the Caspian Basin's oil and gas reserves, the third largest in the world, will keep the United States engaged in Georgia for the foreseeable future. The call for an international education policy by the White House, the Secretaries of Education and State, and the Congress, if implemented and supported by increased funding over time, would increase cross-cultural competencies of both Georgians and Americans and serve the U.S. national interest in Georgia and the region.

Participant Selection

In a state where the system is corrupt and the people face the hardships associated with fiscal/economic collapse, how do you ensure that the right people participate in the right programs? Many argue that young people just forming their first impressions of how they can contribute to society at large and

become responsible leaders in a reformed society are the best targets. They argue that older, more seasoned professionals and decision makers are too set in their ways and are so entangled in the corrupt system that they can not effect change. The counter argument holds that younger people, once trained, will move to greener pastures, or that they may not be in a position yet in their careers to implement what they learn.

For programs taking place in the United States, the added burden is to assess who will return to Georgia. Historically, Georgians have demonstrated a sincere desire to return to their home country following U.S. or third country-based training programs. Ties with family and friends, a love of the motherland, and a sense of hope and belief in the future spur them home. But with the current economic situation and paucity of visible benefits from international aid programs, this trend may be changing. There is a heightened concern about return rates among programmers in Georgia. Key players, from consular officials to NGO leaders, agree that the success of USG programs depends heavily on selecting the best participants.

Several factors present in Georgia are critical to making appropriate selections:

- An Embassy community that is open to and establishes mechanisms for communication, coordination, and cooperation.
- An active and experienced NGO community that views partnership with the USG as a way to achieve common goals and objectives.
- A willingness on the part of program administrators to use as many inputs as possible (suggestions from NGOs, host government entities, and counterpart organizations in the United States) to select program participants.
- A dedicated consular staff that is willing to work with USG and NGO colleagues to ensure compliance with regulations.

Conclusion

The theme of corruption, and the associated theme of economic crisis, appear prominently throughout this report. Consequently, programs and coordination activities that focus on addressing these areas are emphasized more so than many others. This should not be interpreted as a commentary on the quality of the many other programs that occur at this Embassy. An incredible number of high quality programs are being administered in Georgia and in the United States for Georgians. These programs are invaluable in providing opportunities, skills, and experiences to both Georgians and Americans that will foster closer relationships and assist with Georgia's transition to democracy and adoption of a free-market economy.

That said, corruption and economic crisis constitute the 500-pound gorilla that is always lurking in the corner. These factors affect every international exchange and training program in Georgia and add a

level of complexity to programming. A coordinated and flexible approach is critical to address needs and achieve results.

Three areas that have been addressed above as particular challenges for administrators of exchanges and training programs in Georgia need to be emphasized: resource imbalance, flexibility, and performance measurement.

Resource Imbalance: Decision makers need to search for ways to rationalize resource allocations for U.S. Missions overseas. The situation in Georgia, where high funding and programming levels were established without concurrent enhancements to staff and facilities, should not be repeated. Though Georgia is slowly building the necessary staff base to handle its programming load, the poor sequencing appears to have put several offices at a disadvantage. The Embassy staff in Georgia is extremely dedicated and has demonstrated an amazing amount of perseverance and ingenuity when addressing the critical needs they have encountered. But their ability to do so is limited by human resources and facilities. Performance measurement, alumni tracking, and, to a certain degree, coordination suffered. Staff indicated that the situation has improved over the last year, but that these areas are all "works in progress."

Flexibility: Embassy personnel who face highly dynamic environments with unique challenges need to be given the flexibility to adapt to immediate needs and changing longer-term prospects. As we've mentioned, off-the-shelf programming may not best serve the goals of the U.S. Government in the Georgian context. Innovative approaches and cooperative efforts are often needed. Close communication with Embassy personnel will enable organizations in Washington to better assess and more quickly respond to programming needs and to adapt existing resources appropriately.

Performance Measurement: Measuring results is an important aspect of all international exchanges and training programs, but is absolutely crucial when attempting to assess whether new approaches to programming are needed. Both the USG and NGO community discussed the need to tailor approaches to require some degree of accountability on the part of Georgian participants. It would seem that this approach could be tested using several programs in various sectors. But without a performance measurement system in place, assessments of whether one type of approach is more or less effective than another will be purely anecdotal. Embassy staff, because of their experience and level of exposure, will likely instinctively know which approaches are best suited for their environment. Convincing decision makers in Washington will require persuasive results reporting.